

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 8397

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, MILL, EC

SUBJ: REPLACEMENT OF GUAYAS MILITARY GOVERNOR

REF: GUAYAQUIL 1396

1. GUAYAQUIL AND QUITO PRESS TREATMENT SUBJECT OF NEW GOVERNOR FOR GUAYAS PROVINCE (REFTEL) CONTINUES SOMEWHAT EQUIVOCAL. HOWEVER, EMBASSY HAS BEEN TOLD THAT BGEN JAIME SEMBLANTES, PRESENT GUAYAQUIL MILITARY ZONE COMMANDER, HAS DEFINITELY BEEN NAMED TO POST ON A PERMANENT BASIS. IF TRUE, MOVE WOULD REPRESENT SIGNIFICANT LOSS FOR THE NAVY AS GUAYAS GOVERNORSHIP IS ONE OF ECUADOR'S MOST IMPORTANT ADMINISTRATIVE POSTS, EQUAL OR GREATER IN SIGNIFICANCE TO MOST CABINET PORTFOLIOS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT, PREDICTABLY, THE NAVY IS UPSET AT THE PROSPECT OF LOSING WHAT HAS BECOME TRADITIONALLY ONE OF "THEIR" POSITIONS. THIS UNHAPPINESS IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE KEY FACTOR IN DELAYING A DEFINITIVE GOE ANNOUNCEMENT OF SEMBLANTES' APPOINTMENT.

2. WE HAVE ALSO HEARD THAT PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ IS NOT INSENSITIVE TO THE NAVY'S COMPLAINT, AND THAT IT IS HIS INTENTION TO COMPENSATE THEM WITH AN IMPORTANT GOE POSITION IN QUITO, ONE NOT PRESENTLY OCCUPIED BY THE NAVY. IN VIEW OF THE CONTINUED DELAY IN FORMALIZING THE

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APPOINTMENT OF SEMBLANTES, WE SUSPECT THAT THIS POINT IS

STILL THE SUBJECT OF NEGOTIATIONS AMONG RODRIGUEZ, THE NAVY AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF HIS PAST PERFORMANCE, THE PRESIDENT WILL PROBABLY MANAGE TO HAVE HIS WAY WITHOUT LEAVING ANY NOSES DANGEROUSLY OUT OF JOINT.

3. ALTHOUGH AN ABLE AND RESPECTED ADMINISTRATOR, OLMEDO IS WIDELY BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN SYSTEMATICALLY LINING HIS POCKETS WHILE GOVERNOR, AND HE IS ALSO RUMORED TO HAVE BEEN ON THE TAKE FROM GUAYAQUIL'S DRUG TRAFFICKERS. PERHAPS MORE TO THE POINT, HOWEVER, WERE THE AGGRESSIVE AND ENERGETIC OLMEDO'S ILL-CONCEALED POLITICAL AMBITIONS, A RECRUDESCENCE OF WHICH ARE SAID TO HAVE PRECIPITATED HIS REMOVAL AND ASSIGNMENT TO WASHINGTON.

4. WITH SEMBLANTES, RODRIGUEZ WOULD HAVE AN OLD FRIEND AND TRUSTED CONFIDANTE IN THE GUAYAS GOVERNORSHIP, AND THIS WAS PROBABLY HIS SOLE MOTIVE FOR CHOOSING OLMEDO'S REPLACEMENT FROM THE ARMY'S, RATHER THAN THE NAVY'S SENIOR RANKS. ONCE CONFIRMED AS GOVERNOR, IT IS NOT EXPECTED THAT SEMBLANTES WILL CONTINUE TO HOLD HIS PRESENT JOB, COMMANDER OF THE II (GUAYAQUIL) MILITARY ZONE.

5. CONGEN GUAYAQUIL REPORTS THAT THE PROSPECTIVE REPLACEMENT OF OLMEDO BY SEMBLANTES IS WIDELY VIEWED THERE AS "EVIDENCE OF PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ LARA'S CONSOLIDATION OF POWER IN HIS OWN HANDS AND INCREASE IN RELIANCE ON ARMY POWER BASE AT EXPENSE OF NAVY", WITH THE NAVY CORRESPONDINGLY "DEMOTED TO A MARKEDLY SUBORDINATE ROLE". WE FEEL THAT GUAYAQUIL OBSERVERS, WHO TEND TO IDENTIFY WITH THE NAVY (TO THE LIMITED EXTENT THEY SYMPATHIZE WITH ANY OF THE MILITARY) MAY BE EXAGGERATING THE IMPACT OF OLMEDO'S REPLACEMENT BY AN ARMY MAN ON THE NAVY'S OVERALL INFLUENCE WITHIN THE GOE. WE WILL ONLY KNOW FOR SURE WHEN THE GAME OF MUSICAL CHAIRS CURRENTLY BEING PLAYED OUT IN QUITO HAS RUN ITS COURSE.

6. THE TRANSFER OF OLMEDO IS IN ANY EVENT PART OF A PROCESS OF TRANSFERS AND PROMOTIONS WHICH BEGAN WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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THE RELIEF OF NATURAL RESOURCES MINISTER JARRIN IN SEPTEMBER AND WHICH IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE INTO THE WEEKS AND MONTHS AHEAD. WE ARE RELIABLY INFORMED THAT ALL THREE SERVICE CHIEFS WILL BE REPLACED IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF THERE ARE SOME MINISTERIAL CHANGES AS WELL (E.G. DEFENSE). IF PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ PULLS THESE CHANGES OFF, AS WE EXPECT HE WILL, WITHOUT ANYTHING MORE THAN MINOR

GRUMBLINGS, THEN HE WILL MOVE INTO HIS FOURTH YEAR OF
TENURE ALL THE MORE CONSOLIDATED IN HIS PRESIDENCY.
BREWSTER

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